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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE, NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/MUSTAFA

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KWBG](#) [KPAL](#) [KDEM](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: MIXED PALESTINIAN REACTIONS TO TEL AVIV BOMBING

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary. Disparate Palestinian reaction to the April 17 suicide bombing in Tel Aviv has shed further light on divisions between the Hamas leadership and President Abbas. While Abbas and the senior Fatah leadership have condemned the attack, Hamas officials -- either affiliated with the PA government or with the movement's leadership in Gaza or Damascus -- provided justifications for the bombing through their statements to the media. While Hamas PM Isma'il Haniyyah has not given an official response, a senior Hamas official in Damascus labeled the bombing a "legitimate response" to Israeli actions. Fatah grassroots leaders expect Hamas, bound by its past rhetoric in support of resistance and ideology, to avoid any official condemnation. End summary.

While Abbas, Fatah
Condemn Attack...

¶2. (C) Palestinian reaction to the April 17 suicide bombing in Tel Aviv reflected sharply contradictory views. President Abbas issued a statement on behalf of the PA "absolutely condemning the operation, which we consider a despicable operation that harms the Palestinian people." Abbas also called on the Hamas-led PA government and the security forces to prevent such actions in the future, adding that the PA would not cease in pursuing the perpetrators of such attacks. (Note: Abbas told the Consul General and Senator Lieberman April 18 that he had issued three separate statements April 17 condemning the Tel Aviv bombing. End note.) PLO Chief Negotiator Sa'eb Erekat also issued a statement condemning the suicide bombing. He called on Palestinian factions to abide by the "tahdiyyah" (calm).

¶3. (SBU) Separately, the Fatah Central Committee (FCC) issued a statement April 17 which condemned the bombing and rejected all attacks targeting civilians inside Israel. The FCC statement, which also denied any Fatah involvement in the attack, asserted that the bombing contravened Palestinian national interests as it would provide the Government of Israel (GOI) justification to continue its military actions against Palestinians.

...Hamas Offers Justifications

¶4. (SBU) Hamas spokesmen, representing the PA government as well as the movement's leadership in Gaza, avoided condemnation of the bombing. Instead, Hamas PA government spokesman Ghazi Hamad described the attack as a legitimate response to Israeli actions. A Hamas spokesperson for the PA Ministry of Interior offered similar sentiments to the media.

Sami Abu Zuhri, a Hamas spokesperson not affiliated with the PA government, said April 17 that Hamas considered the attack a "normal" response to Israel's ongoing occupation. Abu Zuhri placed full responsibility for the attack on the GOI while criticizing the international community for failing to exercise pressure on Israel. In a similar vein, Damascus-based Hamas leader Musa Abu Marzuq justified the attacks, calling them a legitimate response to Israel's escalation against Palestinians. Abu Marzuq noted that while Hamas would continue to respect the "tahdiyyah," it was the responsibility of any PA government to protect its citizens. (Note: Hamas PM Isma'il Haniyyah has not responded publicly to the bombing or released an official statement on the attack. End note.)

Fatah Grassroots Expect
More Violence Ahead

¶5. (C) Fatah grassroots leaders predicted more violence but little change in Hamas' position. During an April 18 telecon with POL FSN specialist, West Bank Fatah Tanzim leader Husayn al-Shaykh predicted that, absent the establishment of a political dialogue, violence would likely continue and escalate. Israel's response to the bombing would also factor in to how militant groups respond. Al-Shaykh expected no shift in the Hamas' official position toward armed resistance.

¶6. (C) Echoing al-Shaykh's comments, Fatah grassroots leader Ahmad Ebwaini that he expected violence to continue. Ebwaini thought that the Hamas government is in a bind due to its ideological stance toward armed resistance. Under such circumstances, it is unlikely that Hamas could offer any form of condemnation to the bombing.
WALLES